

## EXHIBIT 8-A

### SAMPLE HUMAN INTEREST STORY

#### New low-income units scheduled to open this weekend

By GINNY MERRIAM of the *Missoulian*, Feb. 2, 2005

On Tuesday morning, Amos Seymour turned on the faucet in his own bathroom sink in his own single room apartment on Woody Street.

Water came out.

Seymour smiled.

"This is nice," he said.

Seymour is 49½, 50 in July, he said. The last time he had his own place? October 1974.

The Louisiana native is one of the first residents of Montana's first federally defined "single room occupancy" apartments. The Missoula Housing Authority project turned the Uptown Motel at the corner of Pine and Woody streets across from the Missoula County Courthouse into the 14 Uptown Apartments. It took three years and \$1.1 million of federal, state and local housing authority money. The first new tenants will move in this weekend, after a Friday evening open house.

The apartments fill a housing gap that's sorely needed in Missoula for people who are homeless and have no hope of renting at Missoula's market rates, said Housing Authority director Peter Hance.

"Boarding houses have sort of gone away, because of economics and zoning," he said. "YMCAs, YWCAs don't do that anymore. So there's nothing there."

People with very marginal incomes end up living here and there, going from the rent-by-the-week motel room to the Poverello Center homeless shelter to sleeping in cars.

Take Seymour, for instance. All his life, he has worked at odd jobs, in kitchens and in janitorial roles. He's never sure how much money he'll have, but it's never much.

Thirty years ago, he was working in the kitchens at Fort Polk in Louisiana.

"I was young and dumb, 19 and a half," he said. "I thought, 'I'm going to travel around.' "

He has since, he said. He's ready to settle down.

He's been staying at the Poverello Center since Nov. 5, he said, and doing odd jobs for a downtown merchant.

His new apartment is one of the smaller ones. But he didn't want to look at anything larger.

"This place is all I want," he said. "Something no bigger than this."

Housing Authority staff members saw the need three years ago and enlisted a real estate agent to comb the downtown area for a motel for sale. It had to be a motel with possibilities, not a dive, Hance said at the time.

They found the Uptown, built like a tank of sturdy brick in 1956 and kept in good condition by Kent and Polly Jura, who ran the motel for a family trust. They had often seen a future for the motel as a residence or a senior center.

The location is perfect for people without cars, Hance said.

"That's what I like about being here," Seymour said, "You've got Safeway, St. Pat's, Poverello, Missoula 3:16, the (bus) transfer station, Salvation Army right there. The post office on the corner of Pattee and Broadway. If I want, I can walk down to Eastgate."

The Uptown was attractive for the project because it was affordable, said Andrea Davis, the Housing Authority's planning and development coordinator. The remodel required moving walls, replumbing, rewiring and upgrading the heating. But the project ended up with 14 units for \$1.1 million. The general cost today, Hance said, is about \$100,000 a unit.

The project came together with a \$500,000 Montana HOME grant; \$600,000 of the Housing Authority's development fund that came from selling some public housing stock several years ago; and a \$577,000, 10-year Continuum of Care grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The HUD grant will keep the units affordable for 10 years, Davis said. After that, the Housing Authority can apply for another grant or put together another subsidy.

The maximum rent at the Uptown will be \$385. Tenants pay 30 percent of their incomes.

"If it's no income," Davis said, "it's zero."

The SRO rooms stayed affordable, too, because they don't have kitchens. They have food preparation areas on one side of each room, with pint-size refrigerators and microwave ovens but no stoves. Each room has only one sink, either in the kitchen or the bathroom.

At the open house Friday evening, the Uptown will also show off its public art component. By chance, the Housing Authority staff heard about 500 colorful 6-inch ceramic tiles made by hundreds of people at First Night Missoula festivities from 1999 to 2002. After several community ideas about where to put them - the stadium seating steps at Caras Park, the abutments below the Orange Street Bridge - the tiles were still in storage.

The Uptown's new front landscaping includes seven large concrete planters for flowering trees. The sides of the planters were perfect for the tiles.

The first tile they took out of the box said, "Home is the only place you can always go," Hance said. The second said, "Home at last."

It downright gave them the shivers, Davis said.

That's why an apartment building is on the Gallery Night schedule on Friday. It will also have luminarias made by an after-school group of five students from the International School.

The apartments are leasing this week but will be available as long as it takes to fill them, said Deb Gutzmer, social worker at the Housing Authority. About 20 people have applied, and four have qualified, she said. The building is for single people only, so, for instance, women with children who are in transitional housing aren't eligible. Single people have been traditionally underserved, she said, with families, the elderly and people with disabilities getting priority at the Housing Authority.

Every story is different, Gutzmer said.

"The one thing they've all asked for is some peace and quiet," she said. "The Poverello's a great place. But they're tired of having people look over their shoulder while they read their mail. And it's noisy."

A place of one's own adds stability and order to a life, she said, and other things start coming together.

"They just see all their possibilities that they never saw before," she said.

The Poverello Center does great work, said Poverello development director Julie Emmett. But it's a dormitory. Moving beyond the homeless shelter is hard in Missoula because of the cost of housing.

"The level of homelessness in this community is so great that anything you can do to provide housing at a rent they can afford is so important," she said.

The Housing Authority has two other projects for homeless people in the works, an apartment building for military veterans and a new Joseph Residence for homeless families.

As for Seymour, he's thinking about washing laundry. And getting some dishes and towels from the Salvation Army. And living in his new room, where he can tell the time by the courthouse clock.

"I can come in and shower," he said, "every time I want to."

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### **If you're interested**

The Missoula Housing Authority will hold a grand opening celebration for the Uptown Apartments on Friday with an open house and tours of the apartments from 4 to 6 p.m. at 329 Woody St., at the corner of Pine and Woody streets. The public is welcome. From 4 to 9 p.m., art tiles made by Missoula residents will be lit for display in the installation in front of the building.

If you think you might qualify for the apartments, call the Housing Authority at 549-4113. Future residents for the single room occupancy apartments must be homeless, single and meet low-income guidelines.

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